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BEDS FOR THE BAYVIEW



ALL PHOTOS BY KENZIE ALIZABETH.

BEDS FOR THE BAYVIEW

The case for services and shelter in the district with the second largest homeless population

TJ JOHNSTON

It's Friday afternoon at the drop-in center known as Mother Brown's on the corner of Jennings Street and Van Dyke Avenue. Despite the iron-gated door fronting the entrance, people drop in freely to check their mail, take a shower, do laundry, or chill out in the reception area. For a nominal fee, Mother Brown's rents out lockers.

Gwendolyn Westbrook, the director of the United Council of Human Services — the official name of Mother Brown's — as well as staff describe the place as a community center.

Client Johnny Scott likens Mother Brown's to a family. "This here is a place where people get along," he says. "There may be disagreements, but once it happens, we're still friends, because we're all family, and we know each other."

This community center serves residents in the largely African American neighborhood of Bayview-Hunters Point in San Francisco, many of whom are experiencing homelessness. According to the Homeless Emergency Service Providers Association (HESPA), the neighborhood has 40 percent of the city's homeless population, yet provides only 7 percent of homeless services.

It's because of this disparity that the service providers organization recommends a full-service, 24-hour shelter open in the Bayview and accommodate 100 people, and requests the city to allocate \$2.6 million to address it.

Though clients have been known to stay overnight on the second floor, technically Mother Brown's is not a shelter. It operates a drop-in center where up to 55 people wait — seated in plastic chairs — for an available shelter bed.

The neighborhood's only other service provider is an overnight shelter at the Providence Baptist Church on McKinnon Avenue. If Mother Brown's isn't a shelter per se, then Providence is barely one; it's low-threshold and accommodates up to 110 men and women and an average of three

families, though it rarely fills to capacity. Also, instead of beds, the facility lays out mats on the gym floor instead of beds, and it provides limited storage and showers to women only — only recently, Providence started serving breakfast to guests before their mandatory 6:30 a.m. exit.

A CLEAR NEED

But Melissa Whitehouse, Budget Director in the Mayor's Office of Public Policy and Finance, said the upcoming budget won't include funding for a Bayview shelter. She added that money is available for a family resource center in the neighborhood, as well as drop-in centers and rental subsidies for homeless people. Whitehouse also said that \$2.5 million is being dedicated to the recently opened Navigation Center in the nearby Dogpatch neighborhood. However, the length of stay in the Navigation Centers have been reduced from an indefinite period until housing is found to 30 days. If residents don't access housing within that time frame — and many don't — it's back to the streets they go.

Meanwhile, the health of people sitting at Mother Brown's is at risk.

"They're sick, and they're getting sicker," Westbrook says, citing such ailments as swollen legs and breathing difficulties. "They are dying on the streets and there's nothing we could do about it. It's really heartbreaking."

While airline passengers are inconvenienced from reclining on a seat during red-eye flights, people waiting for a shelter bed must contort their bodies while seated for hours, an especially difficult situation for seniors and people with disabilities. The lights aren't even turned off after dark. The gymnastics performed on a hard-plastic chair aggravates chronic conditions, says Wanda Jean Richardson, a 46-year-old homeless woman.

"(Sitting) is not good for me because of my stroke, or for elderly people or anybody out there. It messes up your legs and stuff," she says.



CHEF LONNELL MCCALL MAKES DINNER AT MOTHER BROWNS. PHOTO BY ALLISON PHUONG.

Collectively, two supervisorial districts in San Francisco account for at least two-thirds of the overall homeless population in the 2010s: District 6 in the central area of the city, and the Bayview's District 10 in the southeastern portion. In 2015, the last year when the City released its statistics on homelessness, District 10 was estimated to have over 1,200 people living without a permanent roof over them.

Why does the Bayview lack suitable amenities for homeless people if it clearly needs them?

"Racism, they don't give a damn about us. What else could it be?" says Westbrook.

The lack of investment in homeless services in the Bayview is the result of a long legacy of racial segregation, real estate speculation, destruction of public housing and mass incarceration in San Francisco — and the United States. Westbrook says that she sees this legacy in play.

"We're on the outskirts of San Francisco. There's not a lot of tourists (here), so it's out of sight, out of mind."

The 27 service providers comprising HESPA agree that the city should close racial gaps: They propose funding for an African American-run organization to run a Bayview shelter.

But opening a much needed shelter with appropriate support services — such as case management, mental health counseling and housing referrals provided by trained, culturally competent staff — might be more easily said than done.

Especially, when neighborhood politics rears its head, and that killed a planned shelter just two years ago.

POLITICAL OPPOSITION

In 2012, the City's Human Services Agency was awarded an almost \$1 million state grant to convert an empty space occupying the same building as Mother Brown's into a shelter. The hope was to create a 100-bed shelter, but it met with resistance.

Supervisor Malia Cohen, who represents District 10, reported being shocked to hear about a new Bayview shelter during

HOMELESS BAYVIEW RESIDENTS SPEAK OUT

"WE NEED MORE BEDS. Ain't no one can keep up sleeping in chairs everyday. Bathrooms are important too 'cause we don't have any on the streets." - Willie

"Sitting is not good for me because of my stroke, for elderly people, or for anyone out here. It'll mess up your legs and stuff." - Wanda

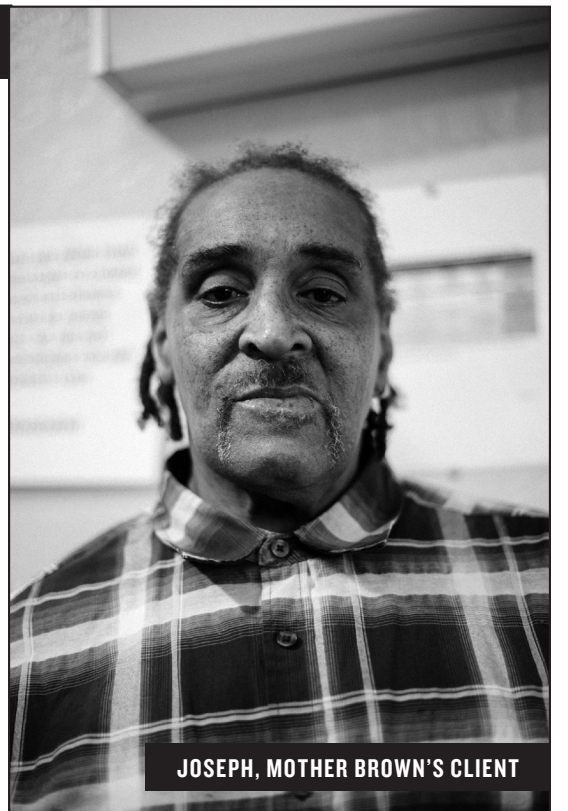
"We need more beds because people don't have nowhere to stay. I'm one of them." - Joseph

"We need beds because we are tired of sleeping on the streets. We are tired of sleeping in chairs." - Sandy

"There isn't enough room for everyone in this shelter. When it's cold and raining, people need somewhere to go." - Ronald



WILLIE, MOTHER BROWN'S CLIENT



JOSEPH, MOTHER BROWN'S CLIENT



PHOTO BY ALLISON PHUONG

Mayor Ed Lee's State of the City address in January 2013.

The Board of Supervisors' vote to accept the grant at their November 19, 2013 meeting was a mere formality, but that didn't stop Cohen — with fellow supervisor Katy Tang — from voting against it. "My opposition has nothing to do with being anti-homeless or being NIMBY," she said. "We should be having a citywide conversation."

Bayview Residents Improving Their Environment (BRITE), an organization formed in 2011 by professionals and mostly newer residents engaged in neighborhood beautification projects, cried foul as well. Businesses in the Bayview, including members of BRITE's business alliance, also filed suit in May 2014. They claimed that the City inadequately informed residents of the proposal. According to the suit, the area is zoned for light-industrial use, making the site improper for a shelter.

Ultimately, the plan was withdrawn the following year, when the city realized that completing the project required an additional \$3 million from the local coffers.

Like the people from BRITE and the lawsuit plaintiffs, Cohen cited a lack of community notice. She also said that the city has already overburdened her district with homeless and low-income services, despite District 10's demographics.

"While there are undoubtedly a significant number of individuals that are in desperate need of emergency shelter and long-term housing, the plan for 2115 Jennings Avenue [sic] was flawed from its inception," Cohen said in a 2015 statement. "For years, the Bayview community has been forced to

carry a bulk of many of San Francisco's supportive services. The idea to build a 100-bed shelter was another example of a unilateral decision by the city that completely lacked any real community process or input."

As of press time, Cohen has not responded to multiple requests for comment on the HESPA proposal.

STAYING IN 94124

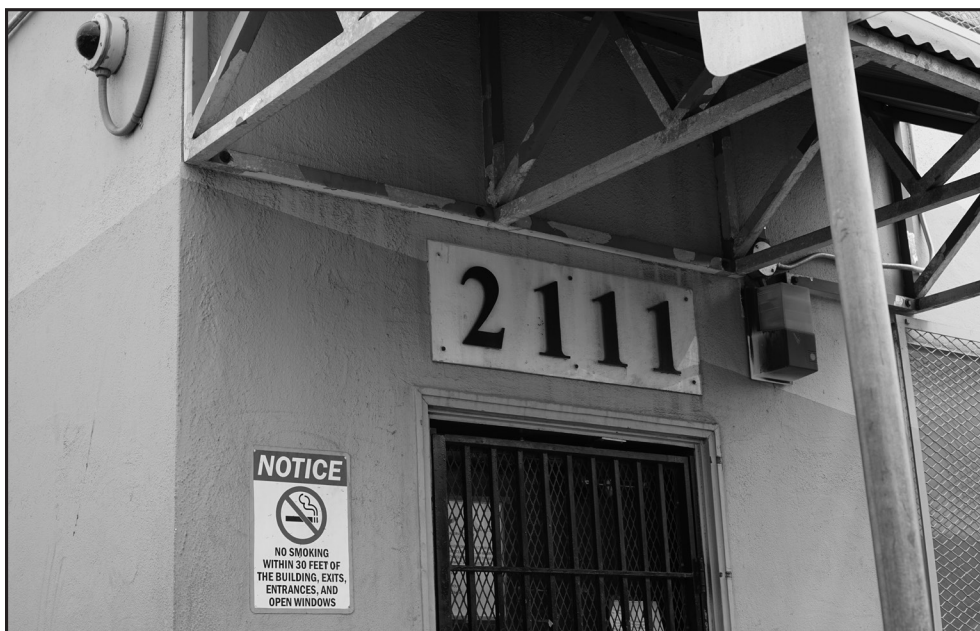
A comparable sum of money to what was required for Jennings Street site could cover costs for a new shelter, according to the HESPA plan. The \$3.2 million providers are asking for would fund the shelter \$635,088 over three months in the 2017/18 fiscal year and \$2,628,498 for the following year. Using capital funds allotted from a 2016 local ballot measure could make that possible, the providers said.

In the meantime, Gwendolyn Westbrook is eyeing a vacant warehouse on Toland Street as a potential site for a Bayview shelter. "If we could get it rehabbed, it would be outstanding and still be in 94124," she says, referring to the area ZIP code. The Evans Street building where a Parisian bakery produced and sold sourdough bread until its 2005 closure would also be convenient, she says.

But Westbrook also finds the runaround just to find an accommodating place for homeless San Franciscans belying the city's image of a welcoming, accepting place.

"They say San Francisco is one of the most liberal places in the world, but there's no compassion for this community," she says. It's sickening to see the way people are being treated." ■

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Demand that the City provides new shelter in the Bayview with supportive services! If you live in District 10 (Bayview-Hunters Point, Potrero Hill, Dogpatch or Visitacion Valley), call Supervisor Malia Cohen at (415) 554-7670. If not, call Mayor Ed Lee at (415) 554-6141.



MEET YOUR VENDOR: ANGEL MASON



My name is Angel Mason. I am a Street Sheet vendor and a volunteer with the Coalition on Homelessness for the past 7 years. I've been working to pass out information in the East Bay, in Oakland, and Berkeley. I've been passing out papers who are fans of the Street Sheet. I made a couple of nice articles about flowers, which was my first article. I've always pushed for feminism and for women's rights since very early back.

I grew up in the West Coast and the Mid-West. I grew up in Oakland a little bit as well. I do like the Bay Area. It's nice weather here. I like writing a lot; I do like to write. I am on YouTube—I'm on there featuring "Haitians Do it Better," which is a video and I am also an advocate of videos doing away with prostitution. I've given ode to Dr. Huey P. Newton and the Black Panthers online. I've been threatened for some of the revolutionary video work that I've done against prostitution.

To be a revolutionary is pushing the limits and going against the odds. As far as revolutionary thinking goes, Oakland is the vanguard, which is where I'm from. I'm very proud to be there, coming from the Mid-West. As a revolutionary, I've seen a lot of angry faces from different societies and communities. I can say with great appreciation that I am very appreciative to come from a revolutionary city such as Oakland, CA. I've made great pains to live there in spite of the fact of gentrification and things of that nature. Gentrification that plagues Oakland. It's really a horrible scene now. It's not the place that it was in the sixties. I'm a big advocate of human rights. To me, feminism and human rights goes hand in hand. I push for gay rights.

We need to keep fighting. The less you fight, the more rights are taken away from individuals. I remember when tents were more obsolete in Oakland. Now, I see tents everywhere. In public streets, in residential areas. Revolutionary work happens 24 hours a day. As long as we can do that, we can do anything. We don't need money, but we do need to be focused on having respect for our own communities. That's where it is: in the people.

Dr. Huey P. Newton was an advocate for human rights—people's rights. As long as we are with the people, they cannot take us out.

I'm saying this for the younger generations to come, who will—and are—filling my shoes. They're doing good. I proclaim this: It's power to the people. All people.

I'm homeless now. I struggle day to day. It's amazing that I'm getting by on shelters and papers. I'm very happy to still have a roof over my head. It's a blessing to know that I have a place to go as opposed to just being out on the street.

I accept any type of donation: money, housing, or otherwise. I am willing to work with anybody in the arts, crafts, or motivational speaking. ■



LET'S TALK MONEY

DURING THE CITY'S BUDGET PROCESS, SERVICE PROVIDERS FIGHT HARD FOR FUNDING TO KEEP SAN FRANCISCANS HOUSED AND HOUSE SAN FRANCISCANS

As the City's budget process draws near, San Francisco's homeless service providers and advocates have come together to call on the City to increase funding for housing and services for homeless populations. The Homeless Emergency Service Providers Association, or HESPA, is a group of 27 nonprofits that includes some of the biggest players in providing homeless services, including Compass Family Services, Larkin Street Youth Services, and Lava Mae.

While San Francisco residents' top concern this year is homelessness according to an annual poll by the Chamber of Commerce, the City allocates little more than 2.7 percent of its almost \$10 billion budget to homelessness. Despite the Mayor's big talk about housing homeless people and providing supportive services, his fiscal track record speaks volumes: Despite the crisis, homelessness is a low priority.

Imminent cuts to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, headed by Secretary Ben Carson, indicate more clearly than ever that San Francisco cannot wait for the federal government to address homelessness. With almost 7,000 homeless people counted in San Francisco's bi-annual homeless count and just over 1,300 shelter beds, shelter waiting lists have hit all-time highs for both families and single adults. At the same time, revenue measures that advocates hoped would pass in the November election—namely K (A sales tax revenue which would have provided an annual \$50 million in homeless services) and S (which would have provided an additional \$17 million towards housing for homeless families and arts)—failed at the ballot.

HESPA is no stranger to budget proposals: Since 2012, they have presented the City with budget proposals and work with city officials throughout the year on homeless and housing programs and policies.

This year, HESPA's budget proposal asks the city to fund \$9.52 million for the Fiscal Years 2017-2018 and \$14.7 million for 2018-2019. The proposal attempts to both prevent homelessness and create exist out of homelessness, while ensuring an adequate emergency services system for those forced to remain on the streets.



SUPERVISOR WALK AROUND

When: June 6th @ 11 AM
Where: Meet at COH- 468 Turk
Why: Present our recommendations for the City Budget



For a deeper understanding of how to effect change attend our Free School- "SF Civics" beforehand from 9-11 AM & then we will head to City Hall.

Questions? Call 415-346-3740

THE ASK

1. PREVENT OR END HOMELESSNESS FOR 500 HOUSEHOLDS

Rents have risen rapidly for everyone, but incomes for the bottom 50 percent of San Franciscans are stagnant. On the supply side, there has been limited creation of housing units that are affordable to homeless people. Tenant-based subsidy programs are crucial to leveling the playing field.

Fund 500 new housing subsidies to be used to prevent homelessness for people at risk of losing their homes or to allow homeless San Franciscans to access housing that they couldn't afford without a subsidy. This would allow San Franciscans to move out of homelessness or retain permanent, rent-controlled housing. In addition, it would ensure formerly homeless individuals stay housed in supportive housing by continuing funding for mediation processes between property managers and tenants.

2. EXPAND AND IMPROVE HOMELESS SERVICES IN THE BAYVIEW NEIGHBORHOOD

Fund operating expenses for a full-service shelter and supportive services, such as case management, in the Bayview neighborhood at an organization run and led by African Americans. The Bayview has the second largest population of homeless people and the largest African American population in San Francisco, yet the only shelter in the neighborhood lacks 24-hour access, actual beds (residents sleep on mats on the floor), and adequate shower access.

Many homeless Bayview residents have severe and chronic health issues, including hypertension, diabetes, respiratory disorders, and mobility issues. There is also an overwhelming number of homeless seniors residing in the Bayview District, many with complex medical and mobility issues. A full-service shelter would be invaluable to these homeless populations.

3. ENHANCE SUPPORTIVE SERVICES PROVIDED TO HOMELESS SHELTER RESIDENTS

San Francisco's Navigation Centers--which are essentially low-barrier shelters—provide enhanced services for their homeless residents, including the provision of storage, permitting pets and partners in the Navigation Centers, and providing laundry, meals, and intensive case management. These services are needed in San Francisco's traditional shelter system, too.

At the same time, traditional shelter residents have due process rights through a shelter grievance process: They are able afforded the opportunity to appeal when asked to leave a shelter. Shelter residents have access to an advocate, can request an internal hearing, and, if there is still a disagreement, can choose to go to arbitration in front of an independent volunteer arbitrator whose decision is binding. Navigation center residents should also have those same rights.

4. ENSURE THAT NO HOMELESS FAMILIES SLEEP ON THE STREETS OR IN SUBSTANDARD CONDITIONS

Families sleep in small spaces on mats on the floor. There are no showers, insufficient bathrooms, and small children in diapers have no access to baths. The facility is closed during most of the day, and most everyone shares a large room. Families must rise early, find a place to shower, often times across town at a women's drop-in center, and then get their children from school. They show up night after night and must bring their belongings with them. We must strive to replace San Francisco's current emergency family shelter, which lacks 24 hour access, showers, and actual beds with a full-service family shelter.

When emergency shelters are full, families are turned away with nowhere to go. They have been forced to sit out in parks all night with their children or sleep on the floors of police stations. While this happens infrequently, it should not happen at all. Instead, families who are turned away from emergency shelters should be provided with one-night stays at moderately-priced hotels.

New initiatives and expanded programs are needed to keep pace with the scope of the crisis. Funding for the proposal would halt the preventable displacement of low-income San Franciscans from rent-controlled housing and relieve the burden of our city's shelters by both expanding shelter and providing housing subsidies to some of the city's most vulnerable residents, while addressing racial disparities in homeless programs.

THE BUDGET PROCESS

On June 1, the Mayor will present his budget proposal for all City departments (with the exception for the Enterprise departments) for fiscal years 2017 to 2018 and 2018 to 2019. The Board of Supervisors Budget and Finance Committee, made up of Supervisors Cohen, Yee, Tang, Kim, and Sheehy, will then hold public hearings on the budget in June and make recommendations to modify the Mayor’s budget to the full Board.

Last year, HESPA succeeded in getting about \$12 million of their budget proposal supported, mostly from the Mayor. However, it was contingent on a failed revenue measure, Proposition K, so that most of that funding disappeared. The Board Committee was also different from last year, and perhaps a bit more friendly. This year, it is chaired by Supervisor Cohen who has been unfriendly towards homeless people in the past, co-sponsoring anti-homeless initiatives like the tent ban, and the large vehicle parking ban, another vital form of shelter for homeless people, while working against the creation of a homeless shelter in the Bayview.

More recently, however, Cohen supported a Navigation Center in located in the Dogpatch, which is in her district: “It is a testament to the cooperation and optimistic pragmatism of the neighborhood and small business community here in Dogpatch that we could make this Navigation Center happen. While the City must continue to collaborate with residents across all districts to alleviate this crisis, District 10 should be proud of its leadership and problem solving.”

Many of the HESPA’s requests are central to her district as it is such such a severely underserved community. Other committee members, such as Supervisor Sheehy, have also had mixed messaging around homelessness, first stating a Navigation Center would be inappropriate in his district, but also stating his support for something for queer youth. Supervisor Yee also stated a Navigation Center in his district is problematic, but he has been supportive of other solutions. Supervisor Kim, who has the district with the largest homeless population, has been a champion of solutions to homelessness and likely the strongest push inside the committee for supporting HESPA’s budget request will fall on her shoulders.

During this time, the Board of Supervisors do not have the power to increase the total budget, but can reallocate funding they have cut from departments. Each Supervisor, both on and off the committee, will submit a list of priorities, and then they negotiate with each other to put a final list together. The Board of Supervisors should have at least \$20 million to work with once they make reductions from the Mayor’s Office. Last year, there was \$24 million, but the budget is a bit tighter this year. There are many competing priorities for this funding, with specific district asks and about \$80 million in requests coming from the community.

The entire budget is heard and voted on by the full Board of Supervisors mid July. The Mayor then approves and signs the budget.

CALL TO ACTION

San Francisco’s ongoing housing crisis, Alan Berube of the Brookings Institute observed, has put its very identity as a city at risk. Can a city consider itself progressive or a “sanctuary city” if it does not make room for the poorest of its citizens? Low-income San Franciscans should not have to face the choice of leaving the city or living on its streets. It is within our power to change this reality, and we need to act swiftly. Join us in demanding budget justice for homeless families and children, seniors, youth, and adults!

Call or email and ask the Mayor and Budget Chair Malia Cohen and ask that they fund the full \$9.52 million HESPA budget proposal to provide shelter, case management, and housing subsidies to address the needs of homeless San Franciscans.

Mayor Ed Lee at (415) 554-6141 or mayoredwinlee@sfgov.org
Supervisor Malia Cohen (415) 554-7670 or malia.cohen@sfgov.org

Thursday, June 6 at 11am Meet us at the Coalition on Homelessness at 468 Turk St. to do a Supervisor Walkaround, where we will be presenting our recommendations for the City Budget in response to the Mayor’s June 1 budget proposal.

Questions? E-mail streetsheet@cohsf.org or call (415) 346-3740

MEMBERS OF HESPA

- AIDS Housing Alliance/SF
Homeless Advocacy Project
Justice & Diversity Center
AIDS Legal Referral Panel
Homeless Prenatal Program
Catholic Charities
Hospitality House
Causa Justa :: Just Cause
Larkin Street Youth Services
Coalition on Homelessness, San Francisco
Lava Mae
Community Awareness Treatment Services, Inc.
MNHC/Mission Neighborhood Resource Center
Compass Family Services

Providence Foundation of San Francisco
Curry Senior Center
Raphael House
Dolores Street Community Services
Saint Vincent de Paul
Episcopal Community Services
San Francisco SafeHouse
Eviction Defense Collaborative
St. Anthony Foundation
GLIDE Foundation
Swords to Plowshares
The Gubbio Project
United Council of Human Services
Hamilton Families

THE HOMELESSNESS EPIDEMIC IS REAL



SHYHYENE BROWN BY BOBBIE SIMKO

SHYHYENE BROWN

Try getting up in the morning to being told you have to pack up and leave. Try staying humble when you are being disrespected by the San Francisco Police Department and the Department of Public Works on a constant basis. Try standing back and watching DPW throw your most precious possessions away in the compactor. Try seeing your loved one’s hauled off to jail for not cooperating with the police. Or waking up in fear of random people hurting you for no reason all because you are homeless.

Every day is not the same when I wake up; it’s different every day. There are days that I just want to be lazy and there are days when I get out and hustle. And on those days, I have to ask friends of mine to watch my belongings just in case DPW comes and wants to take them away. I pray to God that it’s still there when I get back. From my experience being homeless, I’ve had my days of migraine headaches with SFPD and DPW.

See, being homeless is a struggle in itself. Unlike some people who have a 9-to-5 work week and don’t have to worry about where their next meal is coming from or where their head is going to lay. But we do, and it’s a shame how San Francisco can spend all this money for building lavish apartments and playgrounds, but refuse to give a penny for decent housing. The lawmakers have said that San Francisco has a “homeless epidemic.” My question is: Since we have such a problem, then what are the lawmakers doing to solve the problem? When are these government officials going to held accountable for the homeless epidemic as well?

In order to get rid of this epidemic, there are a few things we have to do:

- 1. Build apartments dedicated to the homeless population.** Currently, if a homeless person is staying in the Navigation Center, they can only stay for a longer period of time and access housing if they have been homeless for 13 or more years. We should house all homeless people right when they become homeless, no matter how long they have been homeless.

2. Have on-site case managers who can address all issues such as mental illness, domestic violence, substance abuse, life skills and more.

3. See how it works for one year. If more funding becomes available, build more apartments for homeless people. If not, then strategize around what needs improvements. Let it be co-existent. This means that men, women, LGBT, couples and others can stay together. It also means that we have to create spaces that are welcoming and safe for all groups.

4. Have three square meals a day with a nutritionist on site to manage healthy eating habits.

There are many more things that I can sit here and say, but these are a few important ones.

I challenge all district supervisors and our Mayor to stop spending money relentlessly and spend it on more beneficial things. Just because we are homeless doesn’t mean are not human beings. You want our tents to come down? Then take my suggestion and figure out how you can end this epidemic.

HIGH PAIN, LOW GAIN: NEW REPORT HIGHLIGHTS BURDEN OF FINES AND FEES ON SAN FRANCISCO'S LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS

CRYSTAL YU

San Francisco's Fines and Fees Task Force recently released a report summarizing the impact that fines and fees have on poor and homeless people. Created in late 2016, the task force was organized to provide advice to the city on how to reduce the negative impacts of fines, fees, tickets and other financial penalties on low-income residents.

First, the facts: Across the nation, fines and fees are spreading when Americans can least afford them. Many states and local governments, including California, use them as a way to balance public budgets. In practice, however, these fines simply end up pushing people deeper into poverty. It's often the poor who are hit the hardest, and ironically the ones who are least able to pay.

People of color, in particular, are disproportionately affected. In San Francisco, the burden of these fines and fees falls heavily on the African American community. The numbers are shocking—African Americans make up less than 6 percent of the city's population, yet they represent over half of the people who are in the county jail. Failure to pay fees often results in driver's license suspensions, and, as a result, African American individuals represent more than 70 percent of people seeking legal assistance for driver's license suspensions.

The Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood in San Francisco is a prime example of the biased system at work: It has a relatively high rate of poverty at 23.5 percent, the highest percentage of African American residents in San Francisco at 35.8 percent, and a driver's license suspension rate more than three times the state average.

These fines and fees are a lose-lose proposition for both citizens and the government. The situation is often described by academics as 'high pain, low gain,' meaning fines generally impact poor people the most, while bringing in much less revenue than expected.

Del Seymour, the unofficial 'Mayor of the Tenderloin,' knows firsthand how these fines can impact those in poverty. Before adopting his prestigious nickname, Seymour was homeless for 18 years and spent his time in the Tenderloin collecting various tickets and fines he could not pay off.

"When I was on the streets, I was arrested six times for a \$76 ticket," Seymour says. And his story is not unique.

According to the Fines and Fees Task Force Report, San Francisco police gave over 15,000 "quality of life" citations in 2016 for things like camping on the street, sleeping on sidewalks, loitering or begging for money in public places—in short, for being homeless. Most tickets for these offenses start at a hefty \$200, but that number can quickly rise when people aren't able to pay on time or at all.

From there, the consequences only get more severe. Imagine you already have a \$200 ticket, but you have no way of paying it off. You miss the payment deadline, so you're hit with a \$300 late fee on top of your original ticket. The City also suspends your driver's license. Without



SUPERVISOR JANE KIM AT THE FINES AND FEES PRESS CONFERENCE.

proper identification, you lose your job. As your debt rises, your credit bureau is contacted. They decide to downgrade your credit, which means you won't be able to apply for housing. Previous to last year, the court would issue a warrant for your arrest due to non-payments and the police would ultimately put you in jail to await your hearing, where you rack up even more fees because you're unable to pay your entire bail amount.

You now have thousands of dollars in fees, a criminal record, no driver's license and a grim outlook on future job or housing prospects—all due to one ticket.

"San Francisco's fee system is forcing people into a cycle of debt and incarceration," says District 6 Supervisor Jane Kim, who started the Fines and Fees Task Force with former District 11 Supervisor John Avalos. "[The City's] income inequality is comparable to Rwanda's. San Francisco should not be in the business of impoverishing low-income and working class families because of one mistake."

And it's not just those who are fined who suffer. The process is frustrating for everyone involved: Police are frustrated with responding to calls that are not related to crime; the City and County of San Francisco spends an estimated \$20 million a year responding to just these types of incidents related to homelessness; the Courts waste precious time and resources processing thousands of minor citations instead of more serious offenses; and San Francisco residents and business owners are frustrated if they do not see this process helping people get off the streets and permanently exit homelessness.

The system is broken. But the good news is, the City knows it—and has a plan.

Based on their findings, the Task Force developed recommendations on how to mitigate the impact of fines and fees in six key areas. The biggest recommendation is to "base fine and fee amounts on an individual's ability to pay, to ensure consequences do not place an inequitable burden on low-income San Franciscans." These include things like offering community service options and flexible payment plans.

"Fines have to be based on justice, not because the City needs money," says Elisa Della-Piana, Legal Director for the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights. "People shouldn't be forcibly kept away from their family and community just because they can't pay a fee."

Transportation fines were another key issue in the report. While the SFMTA boasts the most robust transit system in the country, many poor people are still dealt a huge blow if they cannot afford the \$2.50 Muni fare. A Muni fare evasion ticket is \$116; those who are fined do have the option to perform community service to clear the ticket, but must pay \$75 to enroll in the community service program. Under the recommendations of the Task Force, the city will consider expanding community service and payment plan options, lowering fare evasion tickets and adding options to clear them.

But at the same time, the City continues to increase fees and fines: On July 1, enrolling in a community service program will increase to \$78. A Muni fare evasion ticket will rise to \$120.

Specific recommendations are also outlined for driver's license suspensions, bail reform and child support debt. The full report and list of recommendations can be found on the San Francisco Treasurer's website.

In truth, San Francisco has long been a leader in reforming fines and fees. The City was the first to eliminate fees to parents whose children are incarcerated. Most recently, Governor Jerry Brown introduced legislation to end the suspension of driver's licenses for those who are unable to pay court fines and fees. San Francisco will continue to lead the charge, but some worry that other municipalities won't follow suit. With cuts to federal grants on the horizon, cities could use fines as an easy way to bring in money. Governments often increase fines and fees when budgets are tight.

"People are just used to the way things work and don't want to try something new," says Scott Nelson, a member of the Fines and Fees Task Force. "But you can call your representatives and tell them you want change. They're ultimately the ones who can persuade the agencies to take these recommendations."

The task force remains hopeful. It hopes its recommendations will alleviate some of the pressures that fines and fees can cause. Instead of punishing people for being poor or homeless, the new plan allows for more flexible ways to pay or clear fines based on personal circumstances. Says the report, "Our goal is not to advocate for a lack of consequences. Our goal is to make the consequence fit the offense." ■

COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

The STREET SHEET is a project of the Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition on Homelessness organizes poor and homeless people to create permanent solutions to poverty while protecting the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition's work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: They bring their agenda to us. We then turn that agenda into powerful campaigns that are fleshed out at our work group meetings, where homeless people come together with their other community allies to win housing and human rights for all homeless and poor people.

WORKGROUP MEETINGS

AT 468 TURK STREET

HOUSING JUSTICE WORK GROUP

Every Tuesday at noon

The Housing Justice Workgroup is working toward a San Francisco in which every human being can have and maintain decent, habitable, safe, and secure housing. This meeting is in English and Spanish and open to everyone!

HUMAN RIGHTS WORK GROUP

Every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m.

The Human Rights Workgroup has been doing some serious heavy lifting on these issues: conducting direct research, outreach to people on the streets, running multiple campaigns, developing policy, staging direct actions, capturing media attention, and so much more. All those down for the cause are welcome to join!

To learn more about COH workgroup meetings, contact us at : 415-346-3740, or go at : www.cohsf.org

STREET SHEET STAFF

The Street Sheet is a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness. Some stories are collectively written, and some stories have individual authors. But whoever sets fingers to keyboard, all stories are formed by the collective work of dozens of volunteers, and our outreach to hundreds of homeless people.

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HOMELESSNESS, CHILD CARE, AND THE LINK TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY

GIANNI JONES

Parents and community leaders rallied together to advocate for the funding of family navigation services, emergency child care services, and improved shelter conditions for homeless families at the Alameda County Board of Supervisors' Administration Office on May 22, 2017. The action, organized by Parent Voices, a grassroots organization which advocates for quality and affordable child care services for low-income and homeless families throughout California.

Lack of access to child care services within the homeless and low-income pop-



ulations results in the inability to sustain a job, increased experience of stress, issues of safety, maladaptive child development implications, and the inability to obtain and maintain housing according Clarissa Doutherd, Executive Director of Parent Voices Oakland.

With over a dozen chapters across California including in San Francisco, Contra Costa, Alameda, Los Angeles, and San Mateo counties, the nonprofit trains parents to advocate for child care services on local and legislative levels.

Child care is a fundamental need for parents seeking to obtain or maintain housing for their families. However, homeless families are increasingly facing barriers in accessing affordable child care services due to high child care costs, child care providers' limited schedules, which are often inadequate for the working parents of low-income and homeless families, and parents inability to meet eligibility criteria of subsidized child care services. If parents are not able to access such services, how can they truly become self-sufficient?

"Families cannot afford the Bay Area housing market, trauma in families, including in children due to homelessness and issues that led to the housing inability, lack of education and job skills, immigrants without access to benefits, and generational poverty" are prevalent issues among homeless families, according to Erica Kisch, Executive Director of Compass

Family Services, one of the largest social service providers for homeless families in San Francisco.

Recently, government and community leaders have begun making attempts to address the profound need for child care services within the homeless population. San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee announced an increase of \$2.1 million towards the expansion child care services for homeless families. The increased funding for child care services would increase child care subsidies for families (up to \$21,740 annually for in home child care), a shorter waiting list for the city's existing child care program, and help alleviate parental stress, particularly amongst women and families of color, who are disproportionately impacted by homelessness.

Currently, the city's child care program serves 150 children. The funding would nearly double that number by doubling it to 290 children.

Still, the funding is far from adequate and would only serve children under five. Say Kisch, "There are 2,600 low-income children in San Francisco waiting for subsidized child care. The funding we're talking about helps those that are homeless, but there will still be many, many children from low-income families waiting for child care, and many won't get it. The subsidy from the California Department of Education cover about half the cost of a child's education and care at our Compass Children's Center, and we must raise the rest. This is a heavy lift, and part of why there are not more subsidized programs, despite the need, for infants and toddlers."

Systemwide changes to child care are needed to address the issues Bay Area and California families are facing. Allowing families to lead, building better connections to the community providers, and addressing the intricate needs of each family are the foundations to creating positive changes within child care system, Doutherd said.

Even more broadly, Kisch also notes that "child care is not valued in our society, and even though being a child care provider or teacher is very hard work, and certainly very important work, the compensation for these jobs is pretty unacceptable, certainly not enough."

Although Mayor Lee's proposed budget increase for child care services is a great stride to affordable and accessible child care for homeless people, it's evident that systemic issues surrounding child care remain problematic. While there is a demand for services, there continues to be a lack of funding. We must start by creating safe environments for children to learn, giving child care providers decent wages, and providing homeless parents with the supportive services and child care that they need. ■



Writer's Corner

Write a love poem (or five mini love poems) to the five things you would take with you if you had to leave your home suddenly.

If you have no home, write a love poem to the five things you always carry with you.

This writing prompt is brought to you by **GHOSTLINES**.
WWW.GHOSTLINESCOLLECTIVE.TUMBLR.COM

IF YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE YOUR WRITING WITH THE STREET SHEET, YOU CAN E-MAIL STREETSHEET@COHSF.ORG OR MAIL TO STREET SHEET 468 TURK ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102.

They say Home is where
The heart is as a
Transient am I homeless or
Heartless I say not I just
Walk a lot the Evil Spirits in
Some of the bums gets us all
Looked at as crumbs lazy or
Dumb no one ever thinks that
400 hundred years of
Mental spiritual and physical
Abuse wouldn't change the
American Dream
Finding a job where most leave
Their own land because of
Genocide & domination
I'm just stolen property
Lost in my slave owner's children
Monopoly to be out here in
The belly of the beast I fast
They feast to win at my loss
The struggle been real It's
Just getting real y'all

- Kuumba's Son



Economic Opportunity Council Public Forum

Tuesday, June 6th, 2017 1-3pm
EOC Potrero Hill Resource Center
85 Turner Terrace, San Francisco, CA 94107

The Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco is a community action agency dedicated to alleviating poverty in SF. We are seeking input from the community to identify the needs of low income residents in San Francisco and shape our Community Action Plan.

Tell us what your community needs!

- Healthy Food
- Youth programs
- Health Care
- Job Placement
- Education
- Financial Planning

WORLD MEETING OF POPULAR MOVEMENTS

JESUS PEREZ

The Coalition on Homelessness was invited to be part of the World Meeting of Popular Movements, an event in Modesto, California, meant to bring together Catholic leadership and grassroots organizers to address inequality and exclusion. When we first got there it was really crowded, with so many people greeting us and welcoming us. I was so excited to be there, surrounded by people who really wanted to step up and do something, all these people from different places.

There were five of us who attended the three-day conference to speak about homelessness: myself and four other Coalition volunteers. Many people had come to speak about other issues going on in their cities, mainly about immigration, but we were the only group who had come to talk about homelessness, a topic that initially wasn't even on the agenda. People got up and told their stories, how new laws are affecting them, and how things are looking in the future. We heard about struggles in Chicago, in New York, in Miami, in New Orleans, in Sacramento. Looking around I would guess there were about 700 people at this conference.

When we broke off into smaller groups they asked what we do we told them we work with homeless people. Other attendees seemed very interested in what we had to say, and in my group I talked about the things we do here, and people thought our work we do with homeless people was really important. Many people said that while there are homeless people in their cities, it hasn't been as much of a focus, but after talking to us they wanted to take in more seriously. When people I talked to from these other cities go back home I think they will bring this focus on homelessness back with them. I hope we can keep these relationships going.

We should also fight for immigrants because we don't want our communities to get deported. Immigrants are more likely to be homeless because they don't have as much stability, and many of them do farmwork out in the fields so they have to find find places to stay out there. A lot of the people at the conference were themselves immigrants, people who work in the fields doing farmwork. A lot of people said they we have to start doing something.

I hope that we can synthesize the struggles we all learned about through this event, and hope that these other organizations will start working for homeless people, and we can recommit to our work with immigrant communities. Many people think homeless people have rights, except we don't have no rights at all. We all are in this struggle together. ■



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